

Message Text

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ACTION AF-18

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 NEA-10 ISO-00 MC-02 CIAE-00 DODE-00

PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01

PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-15 USIA-15 ACDA-19 IO-13 OMB-01

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FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3251

INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

USINT ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

AMEMBASSY TUNIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L PARIS 24449

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS, FR, LY

SUBJECT: FRENCH CROTAL MISSILES TO LIBYA

DEPT PASS USINT CAIRO

1. FRENCH PRESS QUICKLY PICKED UP SEPTEMBER 14 WASHINGTON POST ARTICLE REPORTING FRENCH SALE OF CROTALE MISSILES TO LIBYA, INCLUDING IMPLICATION THAT SALE MIGHT RESULT IN SECURITY LEAK TO RUSSIA AND THUS IMPEDE US MILITARY'S OWN PURCHASE OF CROTALE.

2. EMBOFF SEPTMBER 17 ASKED QUAI DEPUTY DIRECTOR NORTH AFRICAN AFFAIRS DE WARREN ABOUT PRESS REPORTS. DE WARREN RESPONDED THAT IT WAS PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE FRANCE HAD SOLD CROTALES TO LIBYA SINCE AT LEAST ONE BATTERY OF MISSILES APPEARED N SEPTEMBER 1 PARADE IN TRIPOLI. IN FACT, TWO BATTERIES HAVE ALREADY BEEN DELIVERED AND ONE OR TWO MORE WOULD BE DELIVERED.

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3. DE WARREN SAID HE WANTED TO ADDRESS QUESTION OF SECURITY

POSED IN WASHINGTON POST ARTICLE. SALE, HE SAID, POSED SECURITY QUESTIONS FOR FRENCH THEMSELVES SINCE FRENCH FORCES WERE EQUIPPED WITH CROTALE MISSILES. FRANCE, THEREFORE, WAS FIRST TO BE CONCERNED THAT TECHNOLOGY INVOLVED BE PROTECTED. THREE PRINCIPAL ELEMENTS OF MISSILE REQUIRED PROTECTION: 1) SURVEILLANCE AND TARGETTING SYSTEM; 2) MISSILE ITSELF AND LAUNCHING SYSTEM, AND 3) GUIDANCE SYSTEM WHICH INCLUDED ON BOARD AND GROUND RADARS. CROTALE ALSO HAD SOPHISTICATED SYSTEM FOR JAMMING ELECTRONIC DEFENSIVE COUNTER-MEASURES BY AIRCRAFT BEING ATTACKED.

4. IT WAS JUDGEMENT OF FRENCH EXPERTS THAT EVEN WERE CROTALE MISSILE TO FALL INTO HANDS OF SOVIETS, IT WOULD TAKE THREE YEARS TO REVERSE ENGINEER COMPONENTS. IN ANY EVENT, LIBYANS HAVE BEEN GIVEN LESS SOPHISTICATED VERSION OF CROTALE THAN THAT CURRENTLY IN USE WITH FRENCH FORCES OR PROPOSE FOR SALE TO USA. IN ADDITION FRENCH MILITARY BELIEVED THAT GIVEN US COMPUTER CAPABILITY, USG COULD EASILY IMPROVE SOPHISTICATION OF CROTALE.

5. DE WARREN SAID HE HOPED WE WOULD NOT MAKE "MOUNTAIN OUT OF MILEHILL." FRENCH WERE AS CONCERNED ABOUT SECURITY ELEMENTS OF SALE AS WE. HE SPECULATED THAT THOSE WHO MIGHT WANT TO SEE FRANCO-AMERICAN ARMS DEAL FALL THROUGH WERE COMMERCIAL RIVALS, INCLUDING BRITISH WITH RAPIER MISSILE AND VARIOUS AMERICAN MANUFACTURERS. IN ADDITION, ISRAELIS HAD INTEREST IN PLAYING HUP ANY SUPPLY OF ARMS TO ARAB COUNTRIES.

6. HE SUGGESTED THAT SHOULD FURTHER DETAILS ABOUT CROTALE SALE BE REQUIRED, THAT IT BE PURSUED THROUGH NORMAL MILITARY CHANNELS.

IRWIN

NOTE BY OCT: NOT PASSED CAIRO.

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